

El imperio interno

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Cuadernos de Historia Contemporanea

Published: 30/09/2017

Peer reviewed version

[Cyswllt i'r cyhoeddiad / Link to publication](#)

Dyfyniad o'r fersiwn a gyhoeddwyd / Citation for published version (APA):

Miguellez-Carballeira, H. (2017). El imperio interno: Discursos sobre masculinidad e imperio en los imaginarios nacionales español y catalán del siglo XX. *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporanea*, 39, 105-128. <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CHCO/article/view/56268>

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The Imperial within: Discourses of Masculinity and Empire in the Twentieth-century Spanish and Catalan National Imagination¹

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Abstract. This article takes as a starting point the notion that the Spanish post-imperial imagination after 1898 included the period's preoccupation with the rise of Spain's peripheral separatisms and the idea of Spanish national disintegration as the last phase of the country's imperial decline. The article traces the manifestation of this internal imperial imagination in Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada* (1922) and its reverberations in the writings on Catalan-Castilian relations by Ernesto Giménez Caballero and Jaume Vicens Vives, which interact explicitly with Ortega's text. Further, the article analyses the competitive power play present in the Spanish and Catalan twentieth-century national imagination, where symbolic evocations of empire function as manifestations of a coveted masculine power that are used to convey different political solutions to Spain's internal national conflict.

Keywords: post-1989 Spain; imperial consciousness; *España invertebrada*; Ernesto Giménez Caballero; Jaume Vicens Vives; *Notícia de Catalunya*.

Introduction

In his influential study on the rhetoric and functions of “banal nationalism”, Michael Billig called for a critique of state nationalisms that paid attention to what he termed their “habits of discourse”³. Arguing that banal nationalism “operates with prosaic, routine words, which take notions for granted”, Billig stated that this kind of critique yields its most interesting fruits when it pays attention to the “[s]mall words, rather than the grand memorable phrases”, the “[u]nmemorable clichés and habits of political discourse” which reveal a great deal through their “rhetorical dullness”⁴. In the context of the increasing political momentum of the Catalan process towards independence from Spain, gathering force since 2010, one of the attendant “habits of discourse” has been that of metaphorizing Catalan-Spanish relations as a romantic relationship or a marriage. This image underlies, for example, some of the “ensayos de ocasión” about the question of Catalan independence that have been published – usually with commercial motives – in recent years. Arturo

¹ Preliminary aspects of this article have been presented at the 59th Anglo-Catalan Society Conference (The University of Manchester, 3–5 November 2013), at the “Nuevos Enfoques de la Historia de Género” Symposium (Universidad del País Vasco, 29–30 May 2014) and at the 61st Anglo-Catalan Society Conference (University of Glasgow, 13–15 November 2015). Support for research and writing came from the British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship Scheme 2015–2016 (Award Reference MD140039).

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³ Billig, Michael: *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995, p. 93.

⁴ Billig, Michael, *Banal Nationalism* ... p. 93.

San Agustín's *Cuando se jodió lo nuestro. Cataluña-España: Crónica de un portazo* (2014) is a collection of informal interviews undertaken with various prominent figures from Catalan politics, the media and the private sector, which take the question “¿cuándo se jodió lo nuestro?” – visibly echoing the relationship metaphor – as the starting point for the interviewees' reflections on what triggered the recent escalation of secessionism in Catalonia. In the interview with Catalan journalist Rafael Jorba, for example, Catalan-Spanish relations are portrayed as:

una relación de pareja, una relación fluctuante. Quiero decir que, como en todas las relaciones de pareja, llámele matrimonio o como usted quiera, se producen altibajos, en función del momento, que, en el caso de Cataluña y España, son, claro, momentos históricos⁵.

Likewise, the Catalan journalist Lluís Foix resorts to the marriage metaphor to describe Catalan-Spanish relations, adding that this marriage has been predicated on an arrangement of convenience that went through a historical low towards the end of the nineteenth century, presumably alluding to the end of the formal Spanish empire overseas and the repercussions that this had on the Catalan economy and on the rise of Catalan nationalism during the same period⁶. Javier Ríos' *Destruir España (antes de que ella nos destruya a todos)*, which offers an approving outlook on Catalan independence from the perspective of a young Andalusian living in Barcelona, describes Catalan-Spanish relations as a civil marriage that is “en trámites de separación”⁷. The image has also peppered parliamentary debates in recent years, such as the “cruce de metáforas” between Alfred Bosch and Rosa Díez in May 2014, where the ERC parliamentarian said that “[e]s mejor pasar del matrimonio gruñón a la amistad”, to which Díez responded that one may divorce a husband, but not a father⁸. A particular mutation of the relationship metaphor appears when unionist discourses about the Catalan question resort to the discourses of “seduction” to metaphorize the desirability of Catalonia's continuity as part of Spain, a strategy that drives, for example, some of the discourses on Catalonia of the new party of the left in Spain, Podemos⁹. Other gendered images colouring political and media discourses related to the

⁵ San Agustín, Arturo: *Cuando se jodió lo nuestro. Cataluña-España: crónica de un portazo*, Barcelona, Península, p. 160.

⁶ San Agustín, Arturo, *Cuando se jodió...* p. 300.

⁷ Ríos, Javier, *Destruir España (antes de que ella nos destruya a todos)*, Barcelona, Los libros del lince, p. 13.

⁸ Robles, Antonio: “España y Cataluña no son un matrimonio”, *Libertad Digital*, Opinión, 8 May 2014. Available at: <http://www.libertaddigital.com/opinion/antonio-robles/espana-y-cataluna-no-son-un-matrimonio-71521/>

⁹ Iglesias, Pablo and Errejón, Íñigo: “Carta abierta de Pablo Iglesias e Íñigo Errejón”, Podemos, 3 October 2015. Available at: <http://podemos.info/carta-abierta/>

Catalan process towards independence have turned to tactics of gender emasculation. Thus the results of the Catalan plebiscitary elections of 27 September 2015, which secured a parliamentary majority of pro-independence parties but fell short of getting 50% of the popular vote, were described in some Spanish media outlets as Artur Mas's "gatillazo" (loss of erection), thereby equating electoral defeat or partial loss of control of the political process with the image of the Catalan politician's besmirched masculinity¹⁰.

The above panoply of representational tactics has not emerged in a vacuum but participates in a discursive tradition with regard to Spain's internal national conflicts that has had questions of masculinity at its core. Specifically, studies of nationalisms and masculinity in Spain have emphasised how the Spanish post-1898 regenerationist moment cannot be understood without a consideration of the deep-running preoccupation with national virility that marked the Spanish post-imperial mood¹¹. This line of research has also addressed the interaction between discourses of masculinity and nationalisms in the Spanish twentieth century, raising the question of how this interaction often holds within itself the promotion of certain national/regional imaginaries. For example, Xosé M. Núñez Seixas has indicated how Francoist nationalism was based on a particular definition of Castilian manhood, which was itself derived from *noventayochista* discourses on the image of a "Castilla mística y guerrera [...] tierra de hombres de hierro curtidos por la dureza del paisaje y la amplitud de miras que de él se derivaban"¹². Scholars such as Josep M. Armengol-Carrera have signalled the need to start charting the "counter-images" to this model emerging in the Iberian peripheries, with a view to rendering visible the tensions between normative and non-normative sexualities still informing competing models of national masculinity¹³. For his part, in his extensive study of early twentieth-century Catalan nationalism and its use of imperial metaphors to convey the idea of a Catalan-led project of Spanish regeneration, Enric Ucelay da Cal mentions that such metaphors were "elaboraciones ideológicas masculinas",

¹⁰ Balcarce, Luis, "Pinchazo de los separatistas catalanes", *Periodista Digital*, 27 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.periodistadigital.com/politica/autonomias/2015/09/27/artur-mas-junts-pel-si-junqueras-fiasco-convergencia-cup-elecciones-catalanas-2015.shtml>

¹¹ Blasco Herranz, Inmaculada: "Mujeres y nación: ser españolas en el siglo XX", in Javier Moreno Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas (eds.): *Ser españoles: imaginarios nacionalistas en el siglo XX*, Barcelona, RBA, 2013, p. 170; Cleminson, Richard and Vázquez García, Francisco: *'Los invisibles': A History of Male Homosexuality in Spain, 1850–1939*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, pp. 175–215.

¹² Núñez Seixas, Xosé M.: "Nacionalismo español y franquismo: una visión general", en Manuel ORTIZ HERAS (ed.) *Culturas políticas del nacionalismo español: del franquismo a la transición*, Madrid, Catarata, p. 25.

¹³ Armengol-Carrera, Josep. M (ed.): *Queering Iberia: Iberian Masculinities at the Margins*, New York, Peter Lang, 2012, p. 1–2.

although the implications of this are not elaborated further.¹⁴ In fact, critical acknowledgement that the images of masculinity colouring nationalist discourses in Spain and Catalonia during this period may have responded to each other in competitive interplay, and that this interaction may have been embedded in the wider historical context of national conflict in twentieth-century Spain, is still rare.

In this article I will propose that the use of gender representations appearing in twentieth-century Spanish and Catalan discourses of the nation participate in the larger framework of the Spanish post-imperial condition, which animated late nineteenth-century, twentieth-century and, arguably, early twenty-first-century ideologies of Spain's internal national conflict. The persistence of this condition manifests itself in a discursive framework marked by the competitive play of imperial masculinities, where a dominant Castilian/Spanish masculinity (understood as a condition of imperial greatness) interacts with an emasculated Catalan identity compelled to fashion itself in ways that serve the twentieth-century narratives of Catalan national construction, often through the use of an imperial rhetoric as well, as Ucelay da Cal has amply demonstrated. The above interaction, I will argue, is traceable in the corpus formed by the prime textual example of regenerationist thought on the emergence of peripheral separatisms in post-1898 Spain, José Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada* (1922), and in subsequent texts pertaining to both Spanish and Catalan cultural history which interact with it, including some of Ernesto Giménez Caballero's writings on Catalonia after his conversion to fascism in 1928 – *Genio de España: exaltaciones a una resurrección nacional y del mundo* (1932), *Ante la tumba del catalanismo: notas de un viaje con Franco a Cataluña* (1942) and *Amor a Cataluña* (1942) – and Jaume Vicens Vives' *Notícia de Catalunya* (1954/1960). Although references to Ortega y Gasset's essays on the so-called "Spanish problem" feature in recent work on the cultural and intellectual configuration of turn-of-the-century Spanish nationalist ideologies and their association with the period's (post-)imperial consciousness, I have not, to the best of my knowledge, seen any close analysis of how notions of masculinity and imperial consciousness operate in his *España invertebrada* and of the implications that these may have had on the peripheral national imaginaries with which Ortega's essay ostensibly engages. Taking my cue from Javier Krauel's pioneering work on the competitive emotional politics inherent in the Spanish and Catalan post-imperial condition, I will analyse the textual corpus formed by *España invertebrada* and Giménez Caballero's and Vicens Vives' responses to it, as a palimpsest on which the competing imaginaries of imperial/national masculinities marking Catalan-Spanish relations throughout the twentieth century have been inscribed. In doing so, I wish to contribute to the increase in recent years of research related to the Spanish imperial consciousness and

¹⁴ Ucelay da Cal, Enric: *El imperialismo catalán: Prat de la Riba, Cambó, D'Ors y la conquista moral de España*, Barcelona, Edhasa, 2003, p. 47.

how it framed fin-de-siècle culture and politics, at a time when definitions of Spanish imperialism and nationalism were perforce in flux¹⁵. Whilst cultural scholars in this area have been keen to work with a spatially and temporally fluid definition of the Spanish Empire's end, moving beyond the customarily overloaded date of 1898 and tracing its reverberations across the twentieth century and in the lesser explored geographies of the Spanish imperial purview (the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea), a blind spot in this body of work is revealed whenever the political uses of the Spanish imperial consciousness are explored in relation to the question of Spain's internal national conflicts. In order partially to redress this tendency, I will analyse the gendered images visibly colouring the discourses of empire and masculinity present in twentieth-century Spanish and Catalan writing about Spanish-Catalan relations, in the hope of offering one possible example of how the field of postcolonial criticism of the Spanish Empire and its legacies can also fruitfully turn its gaze inwardly at Spain's internal national conflicts¹⁶.

1. The post-1898 imagination and the question of separatisms: Castilian imperial manhood in Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada*

In his overview of the different strands of Francoist nationalism, Ismael Saz Campos proposes that we should look at Francoism as a nationalist dictatorship whose ambitious and all-encompassing programme for the nationalisation of Spain took direct inspiration from the post-1898 preoccupation with Spanish imperial-national decadence and its possible correctives¹⁷. Among these was the idea that the colonial wars overseas had unleashed a process of national disintegration in Spain, which needed to be tackled through a careful and energetic redefinition of the roles to be played by the nation's constitutive parts, including its increasingly insurrectional internal regions. What is usually acknowledged in scholarly studies of this period is that the formal end of Spanish colonialism overseas marked the beginning of a configurative process of Spanish nationalisation, and that this process in no small measure continued associating the idea of "Spain" to an imperial consciousness, an association that had already been securely forged

¹⁵ See, especially Blanco, Alda: *Cultura y conciencia imperial en la España del siglo XIX*, València, Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2012; Krauel, Javier: *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-siècle Spain*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013; Tsuchiya, Akiko and William Acre, (eds.): *Empire's End: Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016.

¹⁶ For seminal studies of masculinities in colonial and nationalist politics see Sinha, Mrinalini: *Colonial Masculinities: The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995 and Banerjee, Sikata: *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence, and Empire in India and Ireland*, New York, New York University Press, 2012.

¹⁷ Saz Campos, Ismael: *España contra España: Los nacionalismos franquistas*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2003.

in nineteenth-century Spanish historiography¹⁸. What is perhaps not so frequently recognised is that the post-imperial energy characterising numerous post-1898 regenerationist proposals, many of which were geared towards the formulation of what Alistair Hennessy has called a “surrogate imperialism or an ideology of sublimation”, was often oriented towards Spain’s internal regions¹⁹. This blind spot is surprising if we consider that a component of the ideological landscape of 1898 and its aftermath was the acknowledgement in political and historical discourses of there being a link between colonial loss overseas and Catalan and Basque secessionism, as two interrelated stages in the same process of disintegration of the Spanish empire. In his regenerationist essay *La moral de la derrota* (1900), the journalist and lawyer Luis Morote, for example, draws a line between the recent traumatic memory of colonial loss in Cuba and a future dismembering of Spain via Catalan or Basque secession in the following way:

Y como al perderse América, por un efecto natural, aunque triste, de los hechos, se han relajado los vínculos que tienen agregadas las partes de la nación, es fuerza que nos apliquemos á desentrañar las causas de ese mal y sus remedios, si no queremos (Dios no lo haga) que mañana en Cataluña sigan el ejemplo de separación que les ha dado Cuba, ó al otro día en los riscos de las Provincias Vascongadas reproduzcan los partidarios del Rey Neto la ya cuarta guerra civil²⁰.

Morote’s cautioning against the sobering possibility that Catalonia or the Basque Country may follow in Cuba’s footsteps and secede from Spain was echoed only a year afterwards by Alejandro Lerroux in the Spanish Parliament, when he exhorted his fellow parliamentarians to attend seriously to the problems that Catalan separatism was beginning to pose “porque si no el catalanismo ha de dar tales disgustos a España que aquellos otros que trajeron consigo la pérdida de nuestro imperio quedarán empequeñecidos”²¹. Therefore, one of the political uses of Spain’s post-imperial discourses at the turn of the century was the cautioning against the menace to Spanish unity growing within Spanish borders and the further sense of imperial disintegration (and humiliation) that the prospect of an internal region achieving independence could bring about. Historians specialising in this period have acknowledged that awareness of this “colonial continuum” linking the loss of the last Spanish colonies overseas and the looming

¹⁸ See Schmidt-Nowara, Christopher: *The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.

¹⁹ Hennessy, Alistair: “Ramiro de Maeztu: Hispanidad and the Search for a Surrogate Imperialism”, in Josep Harrison and Alan Hoyle (eds.): *Spain’s 1898 crisis: Regenerationism, Modernism, Post-Colonialism*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 105–117.

²⁰ Morote, Luis: *La moral de la derrota*, Madrid, Imprenta y Encuadernación de G. Juste, 1900, p. 106.

²¹ Álvarez Junco, José: *Alejandro Lerroux: El Emperador del Paralelo*, Madrid, Síntesis, 2005, p. 304.

possibility of Spain's internal regions attaining independence did indeed colour the political imagination of the time, and that theories of Spanish internal colonialism had started accordingly to inform movements for national emancipation within the country, particularly in Catalonia²². However, the discursive implications of this fact for Spanish twentieth-century political, cultural and intellectual history are yet to be more systematically explored. A closer analysis of how Spanish post-imperial discourses played a pivotal role in the early twentieth-century debate about the question of Spanish unity – a debate that was without a doubt precipitated by the political development of peripheral nationalisms – helps us reassess, for example, how power-related assumptions implicit in such debate are conveyed ideationally by means of imperial representations and figures of speech. As the feminist critique of colonial discourses has taught us, the circulation of certain notions of gender and sexual difference, including the feminisation of the non-civilised other or the emasculation of colonised populations in the face of the masculine self-fashioning of metropolitan power, has gone hand in hand with the complex interplay of power and resistance, negotiation and mimicry, that underpins colonial conflict²³. Following this line of work, here I will analyse how a series of gender figurations in *España invertebrada* animate Ortega y Gasset's vision for a Castilian-led programme of persuasion about the historical desirability of Spanish territorial unity, and how this programme of persuasion is linked in Ortega's vision to a post-imperial project for twentieth-century Spain that puts the deactivation of the political potential of peripheral "particularismos" at its centre. As we shall see, such deactivation should resort both to discursive and material mechanisms of enforcement, which in *España invertebrada* coalesce around a particular ideal of Castilian post-imperial manhood.

Ortega y Gasset's seminal book *España invertebrada* (published in 1922 but comprising articles which had already appeared in the newspaper *El Sol* since 1920) sees the claims of Spain's peripheral separatisms emerging at the

²² For examples of how historical studies of this period acknowledge the existence of the above mentioned "colonial continuum" linking overseas colonial wars and the pro-independence claims of Spain's internal separatisms, see Balfour, Sebastian: *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1932*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 136–137; Dowling, Andrew: *Catalonia since the Spanish Civil War: Reconstructing the Nation*, Eastbourne, Sussex Academic Press, 2013, pp. 16–17. For an acknowledgment of the historiographical reticence to explore the interaction between "los problemas políticos coloniales y los metropolitanos", see Ucelay da Cal, Enric: *El imperialismo catalán: Prat de la Riba, cambó, D'Ors y la conquista moral de España*, Barcelona, Edhasa, 2003, p. 76. For a full-length account of the emergence of anti-colonialist discourses and activism in turn-of-the-century Catalanism, see Balcells, Albert: "Catalanism and National Emancipation Movements in the Rest of Europe between 1885 and 1939", *Catalan Historical Review*, 6 (2013), pp. 85–104.

²³ See McClintock, Anne: *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, New York, Routledge, 1995 and Yeğenoğlu, Meyda: *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

beginning of the twentieth century as part and parcel of the process of disintegration of the Spanish Empire that had started during Felipe II's reign (1556–1598). In establishing this continuum, Ortega y Gasset's essay was illustrative of a discursive trend which, as was outlined earlier, was not uncommon in post-1898 writings about Spanish national decadence. In the Madrilénian intellectual's words:

de 1580 hasta el día cuanto en España acontece es decadencia y desintegración. El proceso incorporativo va en crecimiento hasta Felipe II. El año vigésimo de su reinado puede considerarse como la divisoria de los destinos peninsulares. Hasta su cima, la historia de España es ascendente y acumulativa; desde ella hacia nosotros, la historia de España es decadente y dispersiva. El proceso de desintegración avanza en riguroso orden de la periferia al centro. Primero se desprenden los Países Bajos y el Milanésado; luego, Nápoles. A principios del siglo XIX se separan las grandes provincias ultramarinas, y a finales de él, las colonias menores de América y Extremo Oriente. En 1900, el cuerpo español ha vuelto a su nativa desnudez peninsular. ¿Termina con esto la desintegración? Será casualidad, pero el desprendimiento de las últimas posesiones ultramarinas parece ser la seña para el comienzo de la dispersión intrapeninsular. En 1900 se empieza a oír el rumor de regionalismos, nacionalismos, separatismos...²⁴

The long and relentless process of Spanish imperial disintegration is described in Ortega's melancholic outline as "el triste espectáculo de un larguísimo multisecular otoño"²⁵. In turn, the forces that are aligned with the instigation of the terminal phases of Spain's "imperial twilight", namely peripheral separatisms and the political classes that indulge their demands, are portrayed, through the loaded term "particularismos", as egotistical and solely concerned with the attainment of their "intereses particulares, caprichosos, vilezas, pasiones y, más que todo esto, prejuicios colectivos"²⁶. Peripheral nationalisms are thus described negatively as the enemies of the common national good, which in Ortega's opinion should be the recuperation of an imperial self-image for Spain, modelled on the times when "España tuvo empresas a que dar cima y se cernía un sentido de vida en común sobre la convivencia peninsular"²⁷.

The recovery of Spain's imperial self-image is associated from the outset with the need to re-kindle Spain's post-imperial libido. The question of desire

²⁴ Ortega y Gasset, José: *España invertebrada: Bosquejos de algunos pensamientos históricos*, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 2007 (1ª edición 1964), pp. 64–65.

²⁵ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 65.

²⁶ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 52.

²⁷ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 62.

appears to frame Ortega's prologue to the book's second edition in October 1922, which he wrote only five months after the publication of the first edition and, as he claims, feeling surprised by its immediate success. Here the author synthesises the book's original intent as that of tackling "la grave enfermedad que España sufre", and introduces this theme via a preliminary consideration of Europe's state of post-war ennui. In contrast to the view that Europe's epochal weakness may be derived from its having fought a deeply reconfigurative world war, Ortega understands war in Nietzschean terms as invigorating and restorative. This can be seen in his unequivocal definition of war as an inherent faculty of the human organism, whose exercise yields rewarding and energising effects:

La guerra fatiga, pero no extenua: es una función natural del organismo humano, para la cual se halla éste prevenido. Los desgastes que ocasiona son pronto compensados mediante el poder de propia regulación que actúa en todos los fenómenos vitales. Cuando el esfuerzo guerrero deja extenuado a quien lo produce, hay motivo para sospechar la salud de éste²⁸.

But if having fought a war does not seem to have brought about a sense of national invigoration in Europe's great nations, this is because they are lacking a directive desire for the kind of great enterprises that once animated their political and social life. The problem is, in essence, that "[e]n Europa hoy no se desea nada"; that "el deseo, secreción exquisita de todo espíritu sano" is entirely missing from the political purview of post-WWI European nation-states and that their state of apathy can be linked, as Ortega does in a condemning fashion, to senectitude, that is, the period of a man's life when desire ceases to be among his main priorities²⁹. In a suggestively ironic remark, Ortega y Gasset concludes that perhaps it will be "los pueblos pequeños y un poco bárbaros", hinting at Spain's Orientalised position from a European perspective, who will lead by example in the process of energetic regeneration that the old continent is calling for. The articles included in *España invertebrada* can thus be read as proposals for how a post-1898 Castile can embody the European regenerationist ideal through its revived investment in a new object of imperial desire, namely the creation of "[una] energía unificadora, central, de *totalización*" that will ensure the continuity of Spanish territorial unity – seen as a *conditio sine qua non* of imperial greatness – against internal separatist pressures³⁰.

The narrative of post-1898 imperial desire developed in *España invertebrada* presents the region of Castile unequivocally as its driving force. This can be seen, first and foremost, in Ortega's outline of Castilian imperial

²⁸ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 35.

²⁹ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 36.

³⁰ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 49.

history since the early modern period, which is included in the book's opening article, "Incorporación y desintegración". Here a parallel is drawn between the Roman and the Castilian empires as models based on the gradual incorporation of territories into a superior entity, and not on their full assimilation to the centre. The fact that Rome conquered Gaul, Ortega argues, did not necessarily mean that the Gauls disintegrated into "una gigantesca masa homogénea llamada Imperio romano". Likewise, "cuando Castilla reduce a unidad Española a Aragón, Cataluña y Vasconia", this act of conquest did not mean that these regions had forcefully to renounce their differentiated character³¹. At this point the Ortega y Gasset devises a particular definition of empire that denies its constitutive recourse to power:

sometimiento, unificación, incorporación, no significa muerte de los grupos como tales grupos; la fuerza de la independencia que hay en ellos perdura, bien que sometida³².

It is therefore important in this ad hoc definition of imperial dynamics that the "fuerza central, escultora de la nación – Roma en el Imperio, Castilla en España, la Isla de Francia en Francia" retains and enforces its guiding role through a variety of methods that are both material and discursive. Evidently, the exercise of power is integral to such methods, although Ortega does not acknowledge as much in terms of the consequences this may have for Castile's "incorporated" cultures. As we are about to see, a particular preoccupation with manhood animates Ortega's distribution of roles in his programme for Spain's national regeneration, which at no point becomes disconnected from the discourses associated with the Spanish post-1898 imperial condition.

As Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García attested in their study of the discourses on male homosexuality in the Spanish fin-de-siècle, the period leading to the Spanish-American War of 1898 and its aftermath was marked by a concern with national virility. In their analysis of some of the foundational texts of Spanish regenerationism, including Ricardo Macías Picavea's *El problema nacional* (1899), Damián Isern's *Del desastre nacional y sus causas* (1899) and Lucas Mallada's *Los males de la patria* (1890), these scholars traced the appearance of references to masculine decline and degeneracy (including a lack of vigour, cowardice, passivity and a proclivity to passion over reason) and how these values were understood "as an attack on the substance of the nation"³³. Appearing two decades after the first wave of Spanish regenerationist writing, Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada* is no exception to this trend. Already in his prologue to the

³¹ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 48.

³² Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 48.

³³ Cleminson, Richard and Vázquez García, Francisco: 'Los invisibles', p. 175, 177.

book's second edition, the author announces that the main theme of his essays, that is, the rise of separatist movements in Spain and the threat that they posed to Spain's post-1898 recovery, needs to address frontally the question of whether the country can still count on a group of (select) men to guide it out of its slumber. Discarding accusations that formulating the question in this manner amounts to unconstructive and unpatriotic pessimism, Ortega diagnoses that: "[n]o es la menor desventura de España la escasez de hombres dotados con talento sinóptico suficiente para formarse una visión íntegra de la situación nacional"³⁴. Consequently, a large part of *España invertebrada* is devoted to addressing the perception current at the time that "hoy no hay hombres en España" and to stipulating the qualities that those men who are called to halt the process of national disintegration should exhibit³⁵.

First and foremost, these men should be Castilian. In the article entitled "¿Por qué hay separatismo?" Ortega considers the mental make-up of Catalan and Basque separatist ideologues, whom he describes as "[u]nos cuantos hombres, movidos por codicias económicas, por soberbias personales, por envidias más o menos privadas", in a portrayal that could be read as relying upon the connection between narcissism and femininity for its damning effect³⁶. To Basque and Catalan unionist politicians and intellectuals he reserves a no less ambivalent role, arguing that their lukewarm opposition to separatist movements in their respective regions is:

un producto de cabezas catalanas y vizcaínas nativamente incapaces – hablo en general y respeto todas las individualidades – para comprender la historia de España. Porque no se le dé vueltas: España es una cosa hecha por Castilla, y hay razones para ir sospechando que, en general, sólo cabezas castellanas tienen órganos adecuados para percibir el gran problema de la España integral³⁷.

In Ortega's design, then, the problem of peripheral separatisms is best tackled by minds like the Castilian, naturally endowed with high-minded, imperial aspirations. The centrality of imperial ideology in the philosopher's account is clearly conveyed in his nostalgic paean to his Castilian native soil

³⁴ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 32.

³⁵ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 92.

³⁶ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 56. For an analysis of the gendered overtones implicit in the debate around the emergence of Galician nationalist historiography, which included the description of historians of the national peripheries as narcissistic and vain, as opposed to rational and objective, see Miguélez-Carballeira, Helena: *Galicia, a Sentimental Nation: Gender, Culture and Politics*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, pp. 125–127.

³⁷ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada*... p. 57.

and the temperament of its people, which is described emphatically in terms of imperial qualities:

Para quien ha nacido en esta cruda altiplanicie que se despereza del Ebro al Tajo, nada hay tan conmovedor como reconstruir el proceso incorporativo que Castilla impone a la periferia peninsular. Desde el principio se advierte que Castilla sabe mandar. No hay más que ver la energía con que acierta a mandarse a sí misma. Ser emperador de sí mismo es la primera condición para imperar a los demás³⁸.

The implications of this thesis are far-reaching, not only because they involve the proposal that the task of securing territorial unity as a condition of Spanish national health is, in essence, a matter of imperial ability, but also because in this enterprise there are regionally differentiated roles to be played, which ultimately rest on the ability to exercise power on the one hand, and to be subjected by it, on the other. If, as is established in Ortega's words above, the Castilian mind is best equipped to tackle the pressing problem of securing Spanish territorial unity both in the present and for the future, then a Castilian-led programme of this sort should draw on the values associated with the ideal of Castilian imperial virility. Energy and the capacity for action and authority are among the most serviceable qualities here, as Ortega elaborates in his definition of what he calls "ese talento nacionalizador", which he sees as:

un talento de carácter imperativo, no un saber teórico, ni una rica fantasía, ni una profunda y contagiosa emotividad de tipo religioso. Es un saber querer y un saber mandar³⁹.

For its incorporative potential to be fully realised, however, the act of "impear" should entail both persuasion and force, the combination of which is a constitutive characteristic of colonial dynamics, as mainstream postcolonial theory has maintained⁴⁰. Thus, in Ortega's vision:

mandar no es simplemente convencer ni simplemente obligar, sino una exquisita mixtura de ambas cosas. La sugestión moral y la imposición material van íntimamente fundidas en todo acto de imperar⁴¹.

With regard to the exercise of force, the idea of Castilian imperial masculinity is reflected in Ortega's defence of militarism, pitted against the dissipating forces of fin-de-siècle "industrialism". In the face of the

³⁸ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* p. 58.

³⁹ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* p. 50.

⁴⁰ See Chatterjee, Partha: *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 56; Gandhi, Leela: *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, p. 14.

⁴¹ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* p. 50.

“perniciosa propaganda en desprestigio de la fuerza” that sweeps through European societies, Ortega asserts that “los pueblos creadores e imperiales” ought to gauge their might by the strength of their military forces, cautioning – in a barely disguised reference to Spain’s 1898 military defeat – that “[r]aza que no se siente ante sí misma deshonrada por la incompetencia y desmoralización de su organismo guerrero, es que se halla profundamente enferma”⁴². But just as important as the ability to exercise force, is the ability to exercise persuasion, and it is from this strategy for imperial authority that Ortega will derive his influential proposal for a durable solution to the problem of Spanish territorial disintegration. As he puts it, “aunque la fuerza represente sólo un papel secundario y auxiliar en los grandes procesos de incorporación nacional, es inseparable de ese otro divino que [...] poseen los pueblos creadores e imperiales” that is, the capacity to generate “un sugestivo programa de vida en común”⁴³. The second part of the book, entitled “La ausencia de los mejores”, delineates just what qualities are required both to create this galvanising sense of collective purpose and to accept it, as well as on whom these differentiated duties should fall. The sense of there being a clear hierarchy in this regard is key, since the confusion of the directive and receptive roles in society is a sure proof of its decadence, which appears symbolised in “the absence of men”:

En las horas decadentes, cuando una nación se desmorona, víctima del particularismo, las masas no quieren ser masas, cada miembro de ellas se cree con personalidad directora, y, revolviéndose contra todo lo que sobresale, descarga sobre él su odio, su necedad y su envidia. Entonces, para justificar su ineptia y acallar un íntimo remordimiento, la masa dice que “no hay hombres”⁴⁴.

Thus a constitutive aspect of Ortega’s vision for long-term Spanish unionist hegemony is the existence, on the one hand, of a “minoría directora” endowed with the qualities of Castilian imperial manhood (described in the first part of the book as a historically proven capacity for high-minded goals and to exercise authority over others) and, on the other, the receptive masses willing to be led by it, which vain particularisms would have to join. The interplay between notions of power and masculinity underlying this vision is discernible in Ortega’s discussion of the values of “exemplarity” and “docility” necessary for this energising collective project, where the author resorts to images of male homosociality to convey his point:

Cuando varios hombres se hallan juntos, acaece que uno de ellos hace un gesto más gracioso, más expresivo, más exacto que los habituales, o bien pronuncia una palabra más bella, más reverberante de sentido, o bien emite un pensamiento más

⁴² Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* p. 55.

⁴³ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* p. 55.

⁴⁴ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* p. 95.

agudo, más luminoso, o bien manifiesta un modo de reacción sentimental ante un caso de la vida que parece más acertado, más gallardo, más elegante o más justo. Si los presentes tienen un temperamento normal sentirán que, automáticamente, brota en su ánimo el deseo de hacer aquel gesto, de pronunciar aquella palabra, de vibrar en pareja emoción⁴⁵.

The capacity for mere mimicry of the best men, however, is not the skill that Ortega is highlighting here, but that of *desiring* assimilation to what these men represent (valour, elegance, an innate capacity for fairness). For this assimilation to occur, inferior men need to exhibit the befitting quality of docility – “la ejemplaridad de unos pocos se articula en la docilidad de otros muchos” – so that, to the imperial competence of securing national unity through material force, a further and more effectual method is added for the long term: that of seduction⁴⁶. It is difficult to miss the gender overtones implicit in Ortega’s application of the ideal of Castilian imperial masculinity to the challenge of securing Spanish national unity in the early twentieth century, a period that saw the strengthening of anti-centralist regionalisms across the Spanish territories. The discursive imaginaries of these early nationalist movements were not averse to formulating their claims in terms of the virility of their demands, as is characteristic of nationalisms in their formative stages, although of course, how this became manifest in their different cultural and historical contexts varies accordingly. The densely masculinist message in Sabino Arana’s definition of traditional Basque identity in the face of the effeminate Basque urban classes that had come into closer contact with Spanish migrant workers is well-known; and the way in which Galician nationalism in the early twentieth century had to fashion itself against the discourses of feminising Celtic sentimentality has also been studied.⁴⁷ Further, the texts of other anti-centralist regionalisms such as those produced in Andalusia in the 1910s, for example, could also be re-read from the perspective of the discourse of “virilization” with which they engage⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* pp. 109–110.

⁴⁶ Ortega y Gasset, José, *España invertebrada...* pp. 110.

⁴⁷ See Aresti, Nerea: “De heroínas viriles”, p. 288, and Miguélez-Carballeira, Helena: *Galicia, a Sentimental Nation*.

⁴⁸ In its 1916 manifesto “Nuestro regionalismo”, the Centro Andaluz de Sevilla included the following statement: “En suma: nos proponemos crear un pueblo culto, viril, consciente y libre, capaz de sentir y de amar y de defender el ideal” (in Lacomba, Juan Antonio: *Blas Infante: La forja de un ideal andaluz*, Sevilla, Fundación Blas Infante, 1983, p. 65, my emphasis). Ortega y Gasset’s article “Teoría de Andalucía” published originally in *El Sol* in 1927, was palpably moved by a desire to deactivate the political potential of Andalusian regionalism through a markedly gendered, Orientalising rhetoric. Linking Andalusian identity to softness (“blandura”) and to vegetative passivity, Ortega compares Andalusia’s role in history to that of China in the following way: “¿Qué papel ha sido el de Andalucía en este orden de la Historia? El mismo de China. Cada trescientos o cuatrocientos años invaden la China tres hordas guerreras de las crudas estepas asiáticas. Caen feroces sobre el pueblo de los Cien Nombres, que apenas o nada resiste. Los chinos se han dejado conquistar por todo el que ha querido. Al ataque brutal oponen blandura:

However, an important difference between the discourses of masculinity in peripheral nationalisms and those put to use by Ortega in his proposal for a Castilian-led solution to the spread of such movements was that Ortega was able to mobilise the energies associated with the mythology of the Spanish empire towards his book's goal at a time when post-imperial emotions (shame, hurt pride, rage) still peppered political and cultural discourses. As Javier Krauel has shown, only Catalanist Iberianism was mounting a comparable campaign during this period, by drawing on the idea of Catalonia's imperial potential as a nation-boosting strategy⁴⁹. In the next section, I will argue that the violent sexual politics inherent in Ernesto Giménez Caballero's writings on Catalonia after his conversion to fascism exacerbate the competitive play between imperial and docile forms of manhood present in Ortega y Gasset's text, consolidating it further into the discursive framework in which the different "solutions" to Spain's internal national conflict have henceforth been articulated.

2. 'La maté porque era mía': Empire as Sexual Violence in Giménez Caballero's Writings on Catalonia

The frenzied rhetoric of sexual violence that was characteristic of Ernesto Giménez Caballero's cultural writing has thankfully not gone unnoticed by critics in recent times. Jo Labanyi's 1996 article on *Genio de España* focused on the text's sexual politics and offered the first analysis of how the imagery of forced love that pervades it acts as a vehicle for the author's vision for Spanish national union, against the prospect of "castrating dismemberment"⁵⁰. In a more recent study, Mario Martín Gijón has specifically situated Giménez Caballero's resentful portrayals of Catalonia as Castile's wayward lover in the wider narrative of imperial desire that animated his vision for Spain's national recovery, an enterprise where Catalonia could have played a leading role by joining Castile in the pursuit of "una política exterior de mayor envergadura", instead of harbouring separatist

su táctica es la táctica del colchón: ceden" (in Ortega y Gasset, José: *Teoría de Andalucía y otros ensayos*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1942, p. 18).

⁴⁹ For a close reading of how imperial outlooks pervade Enric Prat de la Riba's *La nacionalitat catalana*, see Ucelay da Cal, Enric: *El imperialismo catalán...*, and Krauel, Javier: *Imperial Emotions...*, pp. 147–174. Enunciations of a Catalan "imperial pride" associated with the idea of the nation's progress towards virility were already present in Valentí Almirall's *Lo catalanisme*, as can be seen in the following quote: "lo nostre Renaixement històric no ha arribat encara ni de molt a la plenitud de ses forces! Deixem que alçanci l'edat de la virilitat, i és ben segur que tindrà vigor suficient per a influir directament en la marxa no sols de la nostra regió, sino de totes les de la Península" (in Almirall, Valentí: *Lo catalanisme*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1979, 1ª ed. 1886, p. 23).

⁵⁰ Labanyi, Jo: "Women, Asian Hordes and the Threat to the Self in Giménez Caballero's *Genio de España*", *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 74, 4 (1996): p. 381.

aspirations⁵¹. In this section I would like to contribute to this area of enquiry by offering an analysis of how the rhetoric of “love as sexual violence” present in Giménez Caballero’s fascist writings on Catalonia, from *Genio de España* (1932) to the post-War texts *Amor a Cataluña* (1942) and *Ante la tumba del catalanismo: notas de un viaje con Franco a Cataluña* (1942), cannot be separated from the question of competitive imperial manhood that I outline in this article. My analysis rests on an understanding of Giménez Caballero’s exaltation of Castilian imperial manhood as a double reaction, first to Ortega’s earlier formulation of the notion, which Giménez Caballero considered insufficiently masculine to tackle the unfinished problem of Spanish imperial disintegration; secondly, to the political potential of Catalan nationalism, once he had understood, as he candidly put it in his 1932 article “Nosaltres sols. El fascismo catalán”, that Catalanism had grown out of its initial culturalist programme to develop a political capacity to “desvertebrarnos, [...] desmedularnos, [...] desartillarnos y reducirnos a fácil presa, a eunucos”⁵². Beyond the soft solution offered by Ortega’s metaphor of homosocial seduction, Giménez Caballero’s texts work towards a solution based on the profession of “love” for the different Spanish regions, where “love” functions as a byword for Castilian imperial desire. As Giménez Caballero vividly put it in his *Amor a Andalucía* (1944), “No imaginamos el Amor nosotros, castellanos, de otra manera más amable [que] como un ardiente postulado de unidad. Y de expansión de esa unidad: en Imperio”⁵³.

Like Ortega’s *España invertebrada*, Giménez Caballero’s *Genio de España* rested on the emotions attached to the Spanish post-imperial condition (hurt pride, rage and a sense of the neutering of national masculinity) to treat the question of internal separatisms. Drawing on the historical repertoire of Spain’s nineteenth-century colonial experiences (both as agent and as object), Giménez Caballero tries to arouse Spanish imperial sentiment against Catalanism as follows:

La bandera de Ginebra sobre España – ¡queridos españoles, queridos hermanos, creedme! – ¡es la Guerra de la Independencia otra vez en pie! Esa guerra que nos planteó Napoleón, con sus Constituciones y sus Borbones. Esa guerra que Francia y Albión nos plantearon con el “Protectorado Marroquí”, donde estamos haciendo, desde años, ¡de cipayos y senegaleses de cuota!

⁵¹ Martín Gijón, Mario: *Los (anti)intelectuales de la derecha en España: De Giménez Caballero a Jiménez Losantos*, Barcelona, RBA, 2011, p. 138.

⁵² Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: “Nosaltres Sols. El fascismo catalán”, *Informaciones*, 7, quoted in Selva, Enrique: *Ernesto Giménez Caballero: Entre la vanguardia y el fascismo*, Valencia, Institutió Alfons el Magnànim, 1999, p. 181.

⁵³ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Amor a Andalucía*, Madrid, Editorial Nacional, 1944, p. 12.

Esa guerra —¡españoles!—, que hoy la veis alzarse cada vez más atrozmente, con la separación de Cataluña!⁵⁴

Against the impending possibility of Catalonia separating from Spain, which the author situates in the continuum of Spanish imperial history by aligning it with the circumstances of “nuestro Quinientos”, Giménez Caballero offers his readers a thoroughly invigorating programme of national restoration that links the Spanish post-imperial condition to positive, rather than pessimistic notions:

Españoles: por primera vez desde tres siglos ¡hay un alma española que os promete seriamente, fundamental y fundadamente, optimismo, grandeza, reconstrucción y genialidad! Imperio⁵⁵.

By invoking optimism, Giménez Caballero was reacting to the perception that the *noventayochista* treatment of *el problema de España* had been unconstructively pessimistic, an accusation that was associated with a lack of patriotism and, in his earlier writings, with emasculation. In *Circuito imperial*, a collection of articles published after the author’s travels in Europe in the late 1920s, he had already complained about the poetics of plaintiveness that he said motivated Larra’s and Ortega y Gasset’s writings on Spain, calling instead for a poetics of bravery and force⁵⁶. The semantic association between “pessimism” towards Spain’s regeneration and a lack of masculine qualities is taken a step forward in *Genio de España*, where the lack of patriotism of the *noventayochistas* is equated with bastardy. The underlying message in his invective against Joaquín Costa, Ángel Ganivet, Miguel de Unamuno and Pío Baroja, for example, is that these authors’ critique of the idealised view of the Spanish imperial past cannot possibly have sprung from a “racially” Spanish mind, and therefore that their sensitivities must have become bastardized in the process of Spanish modernisation. Nowhere is this interplay between an intellectual’s critique of Spanish imperial grandeur and his lack of masculine honour clearer than in Giménez Caballero’s commentary of Ortega y Gasset’s *España invertebrada*, a book that he describes as a “libro cobarde”⁵⁷. The implication of this maligning is deeply entangled with an imperial message: Ortega y Gasset’s interpretation of the Spanish post-imperial condition is a sterile hybrid between two traditions, the “ortodoxa” (which understands that the maintenance of an empire worth the

⁵⁴ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Genio de España: Exaltaciones a una resurrección nacional y del mundo*, 5ª ed., Barcelona: Ed. Jerarquía, 1939, pp. 222–223.

⁵⁵ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Genio de España...* p. 235.

⁵⁶ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Circuito imperial: Cuadernos de La Gaceta Literaria*, Madrid: La Gaceta Literaria, 1929, p. 124.

⁵⁷ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Genio de España...* p. 52.

nation's name relies on the use of force) and the "heterodoxa" (which turns to the *softer* techniques of persuasion and compromising)⁵⁸. Giménez Caballero's *Genio de España* can be read as a proposal to restore an uncompromisingly imperialist treatment of the question of Spanish unity, one that does not shun, but embraces, the use of material force with regard to internal separatisms, which is seen as the exemplary measure of Castilian imperial manhood. The term *genio de España* therefore stands for the atemporal imperial quality of Castilian identity, which Giménez Caballero sees in terms of virile potency, lust and fecundity, as opposed to the sterility of more heterodox proposals. In this scheme, exercising imperial force is tantamount to a fertile sexual encounter, as "[e]l acto mismo de la fecundación, el *hecho nupcial*, [que] era llamado antiguamente *genialis*, acto *genial*"⁵⁹. Notions of empire and a dominant sexual vigour are thus intrinsic to Giménez Caballero's theorization of *el problema de España* and of the historical task that Castile must embrace to restore Spanish national (imperial) dignity in the twentieth century. His fascist theorizations of the Catalan question provide a prime example of his vision.

In an interview published in the magazine *Interviú* in 1983, only five years before his death, Ernesto Giménez Caballero spoke nostalgically about "la virilidad que teníamos [los españoles] en la época del imperio", reminiscing about the city of Barcelona in the following way: "Qué nostalgia tengo de ella. Durante la Guerra tuvimos que arrasarla, pero, qué quieres. La maté porque era mía"⁶⁰. The key images in these statements – that virility is a condition of empire and that Barcelona was a jealously guarded possession at the mercy of Spanish *passional* violence – were already the main motifs in Giménez Caballero's war writings on Catalonia, compiled as the travel chronicles of Franco's official visits to the "conquered" region in *Amor a Cataluña* (1942) and *Ante la tumba del catalanismo: notas de un viaje con Franco a Cataluña* (1942). It is difficult to overstate how deeply intertwined discourses of masculinity and empire become in Giménez Caballero's vision of a fallen Catalonia, which is repeatedly feminised in his texts as an object of Castilian imperial desire. This is carried out, first and foremost, through the patriarchal erotic imaging of Catalonia as a girl in rags saved from starvation and destitution by the victorious soldiers; as a poisoned princess of the forest awaiting to be saved by her prince in shining armour and as a lusty, adulterous lover finally turned into a dutiful wife through the sheer power of Castilian imperial love: a love which, it must be emphasised, is capable of both persuasion and force, as befits the Spanish *genius*⁶¹. Giménez Caballero

⁵⁸ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Genio de España...*: p. 68.

⁵⁹ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Genio de España...*: p. 163.

⁶⁰ Eyre, Pilar. "Ernesto Giménez Caballero, ideólogo fascista: 'A Hitler le faltaba el testículo derecho'". *Interviú*, 351 (2–8 Feb. 1983), p. 46, p. 47.

⁶¹ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Amor a Cataluña...* pp. 30–31; 40–41; 32.

thus speaks of the early post-War years as the honeymoon period of newlyweds: “Tras las tormentas pasadas, quisiera que este libro llevase miel al corazón de Cataluña y fuese para ella un viaje de novios, de recién casados”⁶². But harmony in this fraught marriage can only come from the understanding that Castilian imperial desire for Catalonia is simultaneously warm and menacing:

Después de este libro – límpido como un cielo de mayo – a nadie le es dable nublarse con dudas una atmósfera perfectamente resuelta. Cataluña es de España cuando España pone amor por conquistarla, con todas las consecuencias de ese amor: desde el abrazo hasta la furia violenta y pasional⁶³.

In the above context, the marriage metaphor rests upon an unequal power relationship that takes Castilian imperial legitimacy over Catalonia for granted, an implication that was not evident, for example, in contemporary uses of the marriage metaphor to refer to other inter-Iberian relations, such as that between Spain and Portugal⁶⁴. Among the corollaries of the use of the love metaphor as a cypher of Castilian imperial power over Catalonia is the emasculation of Catalan men. Thus, in Giménez Caballero’s orientalist depiction of revolutionary Barcelona as a “ciudad asiática, con color de barro, de nieve y de basura”, the city is inhabited by a cast of animalised women who “se subían como monos a los hombres y a los camiones” and of men who “habían dejado de ser, en espantosa mayoría, no sólo españoles sino hombres”⁶⁵. Again, only the strength of Castilian “love” for Catalonia will restore dignity, decency and unity, albeit through the action of violent subjection. The Falangist use of the love metaphor for Spanish-Catalan relations advocates a narrative of gender violence to convey the necessity of Spanish territorial unity as one of the last standing remnants of the Castilian imperial past. In her commentary on the possible implications of this rhetoric of sexual violence, Jo Labanyi wondered whether it could have had any appeal for Spanish women drawn to fascism, a question she explored in a later article⁶⁶. But a comparably relevant question with regard to the political effect

⁶² Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Amor a Cataluña...* p. 9.

⁶³ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Amor a Cataluña...* p. 8.

⁶⁴ In *Círculo imperial*, Giménez Caballero evokes Juan Valera’s use of the relationship metaphor to describe Luso-Spanish relationships as a pact between equals in the following manner: “deseamos ir como novios que van “a vistas”, a fin de conocerse y tratarse, y a fin de considerar si les tiene en cuenta o no su enlace medio proyectado” (Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Círculo imperial...* p. 23).

⁶⁵ Giménez Caballero, Ernesto: *Amor a Cataluña...* p. 40.

⁶⁶ Labanyi, Jo: “La apropiación estratégica de la entrega femenina: identificaciones transgénicas en la obra de algunas militantes falangistas femeninas”, *Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación*, 6 (2009): pp. 489–426.

of such rhetoric concerns the way in which twentieth-century formulations of the Catalan national imagination may have interacted with it. In what remains of this article I will tentatively explore this issue by tracing the shadow of Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada* (and indirectly of its fascist iterations, as represented in the work of Ernesto Giménez Caballero) in the Catalan context.

3. Re-fashioning Catalan Imperial Manhood under Francoism: Jaume Vicens Vives' *Notícia de Catalunya*

Vicens Vives' theorisation of the Catalan national character in his influential book *Notícia de Catalunya* (1954/1960) can be read at various points as a response, twenty-eight years hence, to Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada*⁶⁷. Indeed, one of the book's prompts appears to be Ortega's provocative statement that no Catalan mind could ever understand, let alone solve, the problem of Spanish territorial organisation. Discarding Ortega's thesis as an "atzagaiada monumental", Vicens Vives swiftly dismisses the validity of a historiographical debate framed in such terms by stating that "la nostra escola erudita no ha tingut temps de dedicar-se a aquests jocs d'engrescament historiogràfic"⁶⁸. Despite this declaration of disinterest in Ortega's provocation, much of the content of *Notícia de Catalunya* gives reason to believe that its proposal for a distinctly Catalan intervention into Spanish politics engages dynamically with the post-imperial, gendered imagination that was rooted in Ortega's text. For example, continuing the early twentieth-century Catalan tradition of criticism of Spanish colonialism for its ineptitude, Vicens Vives depicts the Spanish colonial enterprise overseas as a Castilian affair whose demise was also determined by a very Castilian kind of failure. In the historian's account, it was Castile's incapacity to transform Spain into a capitalist imperial power and a modern nation-state over the centuries, while indulging in a "grandesa retòrica superficial i evasioneista, sense cap fibra ètica pregon, sense cap lligam amb la realitat social del temps", that was the reason for the formal demise of Spanish overseas colonialism in 1898⁶⁹. In contrast to the "problemàtica castellana", Catalonia stands as an example of economic expansion and modernisation, particularly in Vicens Vives' account of Catalan eighteenth-century history, which saw the region's first tentative steps into industrialisation. The historian's imperial rhetoric at this point suggests that his vision for a distinctly Catalan intervention into Spanish politics, culture and economics

⁶⁷ The first editions of the Catalan original and the translation into Castilian are from 1954. In 1960, a second edition of the Catalan original was published, which included significant revisions by the author. Here I quote from a 2013 edition of the 1960 version, unless I specify otherwise.

⁶⁸ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya*... p. 190.

⁶⁹ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya*... p. 197.

was still informed by the discourses of Catalan imperial regeneration of Spain present in early twentieth-century theories of Catalan nationality (particularly in Enric Prat de la Riba's 1906 political manifesto *La nacionalitat catalana*), which Javier Krauel has situated in the competitive interplay of (imperial) pride marking Spanish and Catalan nation-building discourses after 1898⁷⁰. Specifically, paragraphs such as the one below, which I quote at length so that its rich colonial allusion can be perceived, can hardly be understood if it is not as part of the interaction of imperial designs present in the tug-of-war between Spanish and Catalan discourses of the nation in the twentieth century. Under this design, and from the perspective of a conservative Catalanism trying to redefine its political and economic role in 1950s Spain, it is Catalonia that had shown the historical ability to conquer Castile through the sheer power of Catalan men's industriousness and their generous contribution to the modernisation of the rest of the Spanish regions:

Sense programa ni propaganda, obscuríssimament, milers de Catalans feren la conquesta d'Espanya. D'aquesta emigració, de les realitzacions econòmiques, tècniques i científiques dels nostres precursors d'ara fa dos-cents anys, només en tenim la petja; però dia arribarà que es contarà fil per randa la gloriosa diàspora de la gent del Principat per les terres de l'antiga Corona castellana. Per mar trobem els catalans renovant l'art de la pesca a Andalusia, Galícia, Santander i Bascònia; per terra, recorren els camins d'Espanya des de Portugal i Andalusia, des de Madrid fins a la Mediterrània o bé s'estableixen com a sastres, sabaters i botiguers a les ciutats i viles de Castella, o encara ensenyen les noves tècniques agrícoles als pagesos dels voltants de Valladolid [...]. Aquesta sang nova renova Castella i li dona un cert dring vital. A molts no els plau la invasió catalana; però té al costat els governants i intel·lectuals il·lustrats. [...] Catalans seran els pagesos que reeixiran a colonitzar la serra Morena, i noms de catalans il·lustres figuren en la nòmina de les principals institucions científiques oficials, tant a l'Acadèmia de la Història com a la de Medicina⁷¹.

The Catalan proposal for the modernisation of Spain, as modelled on Catalan eighteenth-century economic expansion, is based on the "redemptive" power of work⁷². To teach Spaniards this lesson was, according to Vicens Vives, the implicit purpose of Catalan industrialists' exploitation of the Spanish government's protectionist trading measures throughout the nineteenth century, "encara que s'hi vulgui veure una manifestació egoista dels fabricants de Catalunya per mantenir un monopoli tèxtil sobre el mercat espanyol"⁷³. It is telling that Vicens Vives subsequently uses the term

⁷⁰ Krauel, Javier: *Imperial Emotions...* p. 164.

⁷¹ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya...* pp. 206–207.

⁷² Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya...* p. 210.

⁷³ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya...* p. 210.

“vertebració” to refer to the effect that Catalan participation in the imperial economy had for Spanish modernisation, echoing Orteguian terminology⁷⁴. But even more telling is the fact that the first edition of *Notícia de Catalunya* included a chapter section entitled “Feminitat o virilitat de país”, shortened as “Virilitat de país” from the 1960 edition onwards, where Vicens Vives attempts to overwrite the palimpsest of Castilian imperial manhood for the purposes of securing a dignifying narrative of Catalan national difference in masculine terms, whilst delineating the possibilities of Catalan interventionism “Espanya endins”⁷⁵.

Critical reassessments of the political and cultural legacies of Vicens Vives’s work have remarked on how his work as one of the most important historians of the Catalan and Spanish twentieth century went hand in hand, particularly during the 1950s, with the political programme of practicing a “possibilisme digne” for Catalan culture within Francoism⁷⁶. However, no study to date has offered an examination of how this political programme may have been embedded in the national imaginaries promulgated by his most influential text, *Notícia de Catalunya*, or of how these imaginaries interact strategically with discourses of masculinity. Such discourses, Vicens Vives argues explicitly from an early point in his book, need to be tackled in the light of a certain imagination about Catalans as effeminate⁷⁷. The content that follows this acknowledgement can be read as Vicens Vives’ redefinition of a distinctly Catalan model of imperial manhood that would serve the purpose of, as he puts it, “plantejar amb Castella un programa comú per a tots els pobles peninsulars”⁷⁸. Crucial for the appreciation of this model is the recognition that Catalan virility cannot be measured against the conventional values of imperial manhood “dels nòmades, dels guerrers i dels conqueridors”. Rather, the imperial quality of Catalan virility is best perceived if one takes its sedentary character into account, realising that “l’acte de virilitat més gran d’un poble és la conquesta de la terra que el nodreix”⁷⁹. By dint of this redefinition of imperial dynamics as also applicable in a non-expansionist sense, Vicens Vives is able to celebrate the historical narrative of Catalan industrialisation as an act of internal conquest of which Catalans can be suitably proud, along with their other more conventional

⁷⁴ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya...* p. 211.

⁷⁵ Samsó, Joan: *La cultura catalana: entre la clandestinitat i la represa pública*, Vol. I, Barcelona, Publicacions de l’Abadia de Monserrat, 1994, p. 145.

⁷⁶ Pujol Casademont, Enric: *Tres imprescindibles: F. Soldevila, J. Vicens Vives i P. Vilar*, Barcelona, Publicacions de l’Abadia de Monserrat, 2015, p. 64.

⁷⁷ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya...* p. 82.

⁷⁸ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya...* p. 214.

⁷⁹ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya...* p. 83.

imperial enterprises such as “l’expedició dels almogàvers a Orient”. This, he says, is sufficient proof that:

els catalans [...] no són ni més valents ni més covards que els altres pobles de l’Occident europeu i que avui la milícia és més un problema tècnic – d’acadèmies, laboratoris i armament – que de músculs tensos i acerades cordes nervioses⁸⁰.

An indictment of the hyper-masculine, force-driven model of Castilian imperial manhood may have been implicit in Vicens Vives’ remark above; and, central to it, a proposal that the values associated with Catalan virility in his book (sedentarism, tenacity, practicality, “pactism” and *seny*) may prove to be an asset in the new possibilities for economic expansion brought about by the *desarrollista* measures of the late 1950s and 1960s. Whatever their intended meaning, there is little doubt that Vicens Vives’ theorisation of Catalan virility above engages with imperial rhetoric in its goal to construct a distinctly Catalan narrative of national identity which, through an emphasis of the idea of Catalans as hard-working, orderly and pragmatic, could still meet the political and economic demands of the period of Second Francoism on an equal (and not lower) footing. In this regard, my analysis of *Notícia de Catalunya* takes Enric Ucelay da Cal’s and Javier Krauel’s studies of fin-de-siècle Spanish and Catalan discourses of the nation and their deployment of competing uses of the imperial past well into the twentieth century. Further, it refines this body of work by bringing questions of gender and masculinity into the picture. As we have seen, if twentieth-century writings on the Spanish internal national conflict still drew on imperial values to get across a diversity of positions on the subject, from a meritocratic liberalism (Ortega) to a fascist centralism (Giménez Caballero) or an Iberianism of sorts with the Catalan bourgeoisie as the driving power (Vicens Vives), they did so via symbolic representations of empire as a coveted token of masculine power. Echoes of this rhetoric are still perceivable today in the frequent use of gender images to describe Spanish-Catalan relations, where patriarchal messages go uncontested (consider, for example, the marriage metaphor to convey the idea of power inequality, usually by implying that divorce is not an option; or those discussions of the “Catalan problem” as one that can be solved through the work of economic seduction). Seen from the perspective of Catalan discourses of the nation, this gender/imperial dynamic of Catalan-Spanish relations would also help us situate the various traceable examples in the history of twentieth-century Catalanism where some of its foremost philosophers, poets and politicians appear to negotiate their positions vis-à-vis an internalised emasculated identity (consider, for example, Josep Ferrater Mora’s seemingly reactive theorisation of Catalan *seny* in his book *Les formes de la vida catalana i altres assaigs* (1942) not as circumspection, incapacity for action or weakness, he says, but as “l’expressió més perfecta [...] de la robustesa de l’esperit”; Salvador Espriu’s epic poem *La pell de brau* (1960)

⁸⁰ Vicens Vives, Jaume: *Notícia de Catalunya*... p. 84.

as a form of *writing back* at Ortega y Gasset's Castilian post-imperial vision or Josep Tarradellas's memoir *Ja sóc aquí: Record d'un retorn* (1990), where he draws on the palimpsest of Castilian manhood to construct his problematic presidential persona after negotiating his return from exile with the first Adolfo Suárez government⁸¹).

4. Conclusions: Beyond competitive imperial manhoods

Going beyond the question of whether the palimpsest of Castilian-Catalan imperial manhood may provide a way of giving meaning to the inflections in Catalan and Spanish cultural and intellectual history studied in this article, I would like to conclude with a brief mention of ethics. If as Javier Krauel has argued, "the moral consequences of the national identities forged by imperial pride are nothing short of disastrous", then the realisation that twentieth-century discourses about Spain's internal national conflicts may have been characterised by a competitive play of imperial manhood models should give us reason to refine the critical tools with which we take on what Alejandro Mejías-López has said should be the main goal of critical approaches to the legacies of empire in Hispanic contexts, that is, "to reimagine the circulation of culture and power" in all its relevant contexts. One such act of critical re-imagination is, as I hope this article makes clear, that of analysing the possible iterations of the Spanish post-imperial imagination with relation to the internal national debate across the twentieth century and, arguably, to this day⁸². Further, the gendered manner in which aspects of such a debate have been imagined should draw our attention to how a particular sexual politics has been mobilised in certain discourses of nation-building in the Spanish and Catalan context throughout the twentieth century. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that cultural interventions trying to challenge this framework have turned to images of feminist emancipation to convey their message, as is the case with Ángel Puado's short film "Et deixe" (2013), which conceptualises Catalan independence through the image of a woman exercising her

⁸¹ Ferrater Mora, Josep: *Les formes de la vida catalana i altres assaigs*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1980, p. 57. For a study of Espriu's epic poem *La pell de brau* (1960) as a literary text that converses openly with *Espanya invertebrada* on the question of Spanish territorial and political unity, see Gassol i Bellet, Olívia: *La pell de brau de Salvador Espriu o el mite de la salvació*, Barcelona, Publicacions de la Abadia de Montserrat, 2003, pp. 59–124. For evidence of Josep Tarradellas' engagement with the tropes of Castilian manhood, see Tarradellas Josep: *Ja sóc aquí...*: p. 159, where he expresses his pleasure at having had his role in the negotiations compared to "the work of a tank" by José M. Gil Robles in the following manner: "Em permetré confessar que aquesta comparació guerrera, tan castellana, em va complaure".

⁸² Krauel, Javier: *Imperial Emotions...* p. 176; Mejías-López, Alejandro: "Hispanic Studies and the Legacy of Empire", in Tsuchiya, Akiko and William Acre (eds.): *Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World*, Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2016, p. 216.

autonomy from an inconsiderate and oppressive husband: that is, by representing the seemingly unthinkable possibility of divorce⁸³.

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⁸³ Puado, Ángel: “Et Deixé”, *Youtube*, 28 November 2013. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=im_TP3cXrFA

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